

Perkins Youth School of Theology
Making Life Count!

Spring Youth Forum

The Spring Youth Forum (SYF) for High School Students began in 1999 as a component of a youth ministry class taught by Dr. Evelyn Parker, Associate Professor of Christian Education and co-writer of the grant submitted to establish the Perkins Youth School of Theology. The Forum was designed as a venue to engage youth in biblical and theological discussion on issues of youth culture, church and society. Faculty presented on a topic from their current research or a recent publication, and engaged in dialogue with the Perkins community, invited youth and other guests. A panel of teenagers initiated the dialogue with their written responses to the faculty member's article or essay.

In 2003, the Forum format was incorporated as a component of PYST and presently serves as a platform for youth to engage the work of theologians and biblical scholars and explore the issues and implications of theological reflection and dialogue to inform the discipline of theological education in the academy.

Now the annual Spring Youth Forum is a one-day conference, designed for high school students across the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, to discuss issues of youth culture, church, society and the adolescent's struggle to live a liberating Christian faith. PYST youth serve on a panel and read their written responses to a featured essay. In small groups with SMU/Perkins graduate students, youth engage in theological reflection and further discussion about the essay. The conference also consists of church and community networking, an open mic session, raffle prizes and a campus tour. SYF is held each spring on the Saturday before Palm Sunday.

A Forum on Violence and the Bible (2000)

Presenter: Dr. Danna Nolan Fewell, Professor of Hebrew Bible

High school students discussed a chapter from Dr. Fewell's book entitled, "The Children from the Other Side of the River." The discourse resulted in a reshaping of the chapter in her book Children of Israel: Reading the Bible for the Sake of our Children, Abingdon Press, 2003.

A Forum on Girls' Spirituality (2001)

Presenters: Dr. Rebekah Miles, Associate Professor of Ethics and Rev. Shonda Jones, Perkins School of Theology

Adolescent girls from different racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds discussed their Christian spirituality and how it relates to the issues of sexism, racism and classism in their lives.

The Marginal God (2002)

Presenter: Dr. Joerg Rieger, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Perkins School of Theology
A discussion on issues of poverty, wealth, society and the church with a special emphasis on the United Methodist Church.

"She's Seen the Lord..." (2003)

Presenter: Dr. Jamie Clark-Soles, Associate Professor of New Testament, Perkins School of Theology
A critical biblical and theological discussion on issues of life and death in the Gospel of John.

Theology and Mission: The Final Frontier (2004)

Presenter: Dr. Joerg Rieger, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Perkins School of Theology
A theological look at neocolonialism and post-colonialism in mission work.

Aaron Douglas, The Harlem Renaissance & Biblical Art (2005)

Presenter: Dr. Abraham Smith, Associate Professor of New Testament, Perkins School of Theology
A historical look at the writings of James Weldon Johnson's book, God's Trombones and the artistic biblical depictions by Aaron Douglass within the book.

"Is This The End?" A Feminist Perspective on Eschatology (2006)

Presenter: Dr. Valerie A. Karras, Assistant Professor of Church History, Perkins School of Theology.
An Eastern Orthodox perspective on realized and unrealized eschatology which critiques the Western Christian theological methods and concepts in both traditional patriarchal and mainline feminist models.

Oh' Sing Globally! Using Cross-Cultural Music in Worship. (2007)

Presenter: Dr. Michael Hawn, Professor of Church Music, Perkins School of Theology.
An examination of diverse expressions of worship using a multi-cultural context for music and liturgy.

Emerging Evangelism (2008)

Presenter: Dr. Elaine Heath, McCreless Assistant Professor of Evangelism at Perkins School of Theology. Is the emergent church a new wave of evangelical identity?

Thinking Theologically (2009)

Presenter: Dr. Theodore Walker, Jr. Associate Professor of Ethics and Society.

How do we think theologically? What does all our “God-talk” really mean? In what ways does our faith seek understanding?